

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/11
Paper 1

Key messages

The key messages for this series are:

Candidates must follow the instructions given in the question and only include the material specifically asked for.

Extended answers require a detailed response; the space provided for an answer is a good indication of how much could be written in a response.

Relevancy, accuracy, and depth takes a response to the higher levels.

General comments

Over the years there has been a significant improvement in the way questions are answered. Many candidates go into extensive detail, they describe all the events or aspects of the question and quote sources of authority where possible.

Questions requiring candidates to show understanding are completed quite well. Candidates demonstrate understanding of what is being asked, present a sound argument, which is often supported by evidence and examples.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates who performed well focused on the precise themes of the passages they selected. Such candidates talked about different aspects of God's nature related in the passage. In passage (i) this included *Tawhid*, omniscience, and the subliminal nature of God. In passage (ii), God as the Creator, Teacher of humans as well as All Knowing. In passage (iii), God as the Protector and Guardian of the humans who is also their Lord and the King. After identifying at least three themes from each passage, these candidates also elaborated or developed the themes further and, sometimes, supported them with quotes from the Qur'an.

A large number of candidates described the obvious themes in a very plain and simplistic way without any attempt to offer further development. Some candidates often confused themes contained in a passage with those from another Sura or simply narrated some common themes of the Qur'an, hence limiting the level they could reach.

- (b) Candidates who performed well were able to show the significance of the themes in Muslims' lives in today's world. They talked about how passage (i) crystallises belief in *Tawhid*, keeps Muslims away from most implicit forms of *shirkas* as well as inspiring awe and fear in the hearts of believers. Those attempting passages (ii) and (iii) discussed how these inspire Muslims to acquire knowledge or always seek God's protection against different forms of evil.

Candidates whose work scored average marks relied on more simplistic explanations and suggestions about things Muslims should do after reading these passages, most common of which were believing in God, not associating any partners with Him and fulfilling all His commands.

Question 2

- (a) The question asked candidates to describe what God says about His relationship with any two of His Messengers. The candidates were further instructed to refer to the passages in the syllabus only. The responses were mixed. Candidates who performed well gave very focused answers that used the precise passages from the syllabus and highlighted different aspects of the relationship, such as God being creator, teacher, guide of the prophet Adam, as well as being the one punishing him for disobedience or forgiving him when he repented. Similarly, they talked about God's guidance and assistance in different forms including the granting of miracles, books and knowledge and the protection of, or special blessings for, some of His chosen people.

Some candidates' work showed common mistakes such as giving a brief summary of different prophets' stories, placing the emphasis more on general aspects rather than the relationship between God and the prophets. Some lost focus along the way and talked about events that were not covered by the passages present in the syllabus, such as details of the prophet Ibrahim's encounter with his nation and the subsequent events. Another common mistake was putting more emphasis on stories that were from within the relevant passages but were not relevant to the question asked.

- (b) Candidates were asked to explain how the Qur'an could be used to form a close relationship with God. Some excellent answers were seen. These talked about how the Qur'an explains power and majesty as well as the attributes of God. This in turn created fear in readers' hearts, and they worship their creator. Reading about religious obligations such as *Salat*, *Zakat* and fasting makes a believer a practising Muslim, hence bringing him close to his Lord.

Candidates who performed well showed very good understanding of the actual question and presented evidence in the form of precise examples to support the claims made, even using personal examples where possible. One mentioned, that while reciting the Qur'an, Allah listened to him and it gave him hope to overcome the difficulties he faced and helped him seek aid as he says in Sura *Fatiha*, 'you we worship and your aid we seek'.

Candidates who performed less well on this question made the claim that the Qur'an brings one closer to God but they could not substantiate it with any reasoning as to how, or give examples. Similar responses wrote general notes about the Qur'an.

Question 3

- (a) This question was answered by almost half the cohort. It was answered well by the majority of them, in particular **part (a)**. Candidates wrote elaborate notes on the background of the conquest of Makka, their work covered minute details about preparation for the invasion and entrance into Makka, and was especially focused on the incidents that took place as Muslims entered and took over the Holy City. Precise quotes from the orders given by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his declarations were also given.

The main characteristic of candidates' work that scored lower marks, was that too much time was spent on giving background information. This information presented unnecessary details of the incident of the violation of the treaty of *Hudabiyya*. Some candidates went even further back and started their answer with information from the treaty of *Hudabiyya*. A brief reference to it would have sufficed, then real focus could have been the actual event of the conquest of Makka.

Other answers were characterised by a brief account that covered some main occurrences but details within each event were also very brief. Some responses only contained a short summary or outline of a few events from the conquest.

- (b) There were some excellent responses that listed the following reasons the Prophet (pbuh) offered refuge to the *Makkans*:
- To save them from the revenge of companions who were mistreated and thrown out from Makka.
 - To show them how compassionate and merciful the Prophet (pbuh) was.
 - To demonstrate the quality of forgiveness, that is the hallmark of Islam.
 - To demonstrate that Islam is peaceful and likes to avoid bloodshed.

- To persuade the *Makkans* to accept Islam.

Candidates whose work did not score higher marks either, gave a descriptive account of what happened at the time of the conquest without giving any reasons about why it was done, or suggested what lessons should be learned by the Muslims from this treatment.

Question 4

- (a) Two-thirds of the cohort attempted to answer this question. Candidates who performed well had answers that were focused, thorough and comprehensive. Their selected events were written about in considerable detail while they explained specifically which trait was highlighted by the incident chosen. The prophet's visit to Ta'if, the general pardon granted at the time of the conquest of Makka, and the generosity shown by the Prophet (pbuh) on several occasions, were the most popular examples given.

Some candidates confused the question with those asked in the past and answered slightly differently. Others were very brief, gave just a short outline of an event and then proceeded to the next one. Better responses selected highly relevant events, gave precise details of the event selected and narrated in an explicit way which quality or moral character was shown.

- (b) Lower level answers were simplistic. They chose one trait demonstrated by the Prophet (pbuh) and then gave a list of suggestions saying what Muslims should or should not do.

Better responses showed a good understanding of the question, referred to a specific incident mentioned in **part (a)** and showed how the Prophet's actions are still relevant. These answers gave precise reasons, as well as saying how, if followed, it will reform the society.

Some candidates wrote a long note suggesting general moral actions to be followed by Muslims. This is a generic way of responding to most **part (b)** questions. Here, they were expected to give reasons why the Prophet's moral character is still relevant and how, in their opinion, present circumstances in most Muslim communities require following the Prophet's ethical characteristics. Where candidates were able to do that, higher marks were achieved.

Question 5

- (a) This question was very popular with nearly ninety per cent of the cohort attempting to answer it. Candidates had to narrate the difficulties faced by the early followers of Islam. Almost all the candidates mentioned Bilal, Yasir, Sumayyah, the migration to Abyssinia and the boycott of Banu Hashim. Candidates who performed well described the hardships encountered by Khabab bin-Arat, Zunaira, Abu Bakr, 'Uthman, Mas'ab, Shuaib Rumi, Talha, Zubair and Abu Dharr al-Ghifari. More developed answers went into significant details of the oppression against early Muslims, these answers highlighted their sufferings in precise detail.

Candidates whose work scored lower marks made the following mistakes:

- Incomplete details.
- Inaccuracies, for example giving the wrong name.
- Describing hardships faced by the Prophet (pbuh) himself.
- Making generalised statements about hardships and the reactions of those suffering without giving any specific details.
- Giving irrelevant details, such as what happened in the court of Negus.

- (b) Many candidates discussed how Muslims learned to be patient, believe in God and not give up when faced with hardships. Candidates who performed better took personal examples and showed how Muslims can find hope in those circumstances, by taking inspiration from the lives of early converts. More developed answers discussed how these events give relief to Muslims today, that they are free to act upon their religious obligations without any fear, but it was not the case for early Muslims. Some candidates gave very descriptive answers and only focused on the reactions of early Muslims, while they made brief statements at the end, urging Muslims to follow in their footsteps.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/12
Paper 1

Key messages

Candidates must be made aware of assessment objectives for the paper so that they know what is required in each question.

In part **(b)** sections of the questions, which are based on AO2, candidates must show their understanding through evaluation, analysis, reasoning, or exemplification. A descriptive note is not required here.

The questions must be read very carefully because understanding the demands of the question is the most crucial factor in answering it correctly and gaining access to the higher marks.

Candidates must demonstrate their ability to select relevant information and present it in a coherent way to get the top marks – writing everything one knows about a particular topic does not guarantee this.

General comments

Examiners saw a full range of scripts, from those that were fully developed to those with little understanding. Knowledge-based questions were completed much better than the evaluative questions. There were very few rubric mistakes, but some candidates did leave out part **(b)** of some questions, which should be discouraged.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Typical responses to this question exemplified much of the following:

- A simplistic statement about, or identification of, the theme.
- Absence of any development of the theme identified.
- Too much of a background and irrelevant information.
- General themes of the Qur'an for every passage.
- Confusing combinations of the themes from different passages.

In addition to this, candidates might state, 'the passage tells us about *Tawhid* (God's nature or qualities)', but they do not precisely convey what aspect of *Tawhid* or God's nature and attributes is discussed.

To get higher marks in this question, candidates should be encouraged to go straight to the actual theme which means the central idea, concept or the underlying principle. Even in the passages where the background is significant, a brief mention will suffice. After briefly identifying the theme it should be developed further. A reference can also be given to support the theme.

(b) Good answers to passage **(i)** were characterised by responses that included, creating fear of accountability in Muslims, making them stay away from sins and relying on God, and seeking his assistance in hard times. In passage **(ii)**, encouraging Muslims to observe their surrounding and not be misguided by the apparent glory of anything, and to have a strong faith in God and His prophets. In passage **(iii)**, reassuring Muslims of God's help in times of turmoil as well as creating more reverence for the Prophet (pbuh) seeing the regard God has for His prophets.

Responses that displayed attributes of a basic answer, included comments such as, 'Muslims should only believe in God', or 'hence Muslims should not do *shirk*'. These are simplistic statements that can only earn marks in the low level. To get to the higher level candidates need to be more specific, develop more, and say precisely what forms of implicit *shirk* could be present in societies, and how that could be avoided. For instance, by referring to going to the tombs and graves, or fortune tellers, or relying on magic. Similarly, some candidates would say, 'this Sura makes one have a strong belief in God's assistance' but then would fail to show how. To be more specific responses could highlight practical examples from everyday lives of Muslims where they feel weak, vulnerable, and helpless. For instance, they could say that they could gain confidence from the belief that God will be there as their protector and saviour.

Question 2

- (a) This question differentiated well between candidates of varying abilities. Stronger answers were extremely focused and selected relevant information about ways in which the Prophet (pbuh) received revelations. They mentioned his experience of the first revelations and the bodily sensations experienced by him as told by his wife and companions and as recorded in the famous Hadiths.

Excellent responses went a step further and talked about the different forms Jibril appeared in, the frequency of the revelations and reference was made to the direct experience the Prophet (pbuh) had with God.

Some responses lacked focus and gave information which was not truly relevant, such as the conversation between Khadija and the Prophet (pbuh), or between the Prophet (pbuh) and Warqa after the first revelation. Others started talking about the sequence of revelations from first to second and third and so on. *Makki* and *Madni* Suras were more commonly written aspects which were not very relevant.

- (b) Good answers talked about how the prophet being *Ummi* ensured that Makkans could not object to the Qur'an being a creation of the Prophet's own mind or that inspiration came from earlier books. Some candidates disagreed with the claim and said that the Prophet's inability to read and write did not matter as it was God's choice who was selected. Some claimed that there were other factors that determined this choice including the Prophet's impeccable character, they said his inability to read and write was quite insignificant.

A lack of further development was the major factor in many answers not attaining high levels. Candidates tend to make a claim but do not attempt to justify their opinion with reasons or give examples to support the claim.

Question 3

- (a) This was the most popular question amongst candidates. Many of them responded well and gave a detailed account of the hardships faced by the Prophet (pbuh) during his time in Makka. They mentioned the demeaning replies of Banu Hashim and the Quraysh to the initial, open invitations to Islam. They proceeded to mention major events involving Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl and Umm Jamil. The boycott imposed on Banu Hashim was also mentioned by most of the candidates.

Excellent responses went further and narrated incidents of mistreatment of the Prophet (pbuh) when there was a break in revelations, by Umm Jamil, and some lesser known acts of brutality by Abu Jahl. Offers of bribery, coercion, as well as attempts to reconcile through offers to the Prophet (pbuh) to accept the gods of the Makkans in exchange for their acceptance of Islam, were also described.

Weaker responses were characterised by a lack of focus, going into unnecessary details, and the inclusion of irrelevant facts. Such responses included detailed accounts of the atrocities faced by the early Muslims, whereas the question was specifically about the Prophet (pbuh). Other answers showed an inability to select the relevant details and present them as a coherent whole. Superfluous information about the first invite to the Hashim clan or the Safa Hill incident as well as boycott, took the focus away from the task at hand. While these events were relevant, candidates should have been able to select and present only the most relevant part and must demonstrate their ability to go into precise details where necessary. Other features of low attaining responses were inaccuracies such as confusing the names of the personalities involved as well as a lack of detail in each individual incident.

- (b) The strongest responses reasoned very clearly, offered sound explanations of how the Prophet's reaction to the atrocities can be replicated by today's Muslims, and used personal experiences or examples to illustrate these.

A good example would be Muslims learning patience, steadfastness and forgiveness under duress, then followed by some practical examples given of how Muslims can demonstrate these in their personal lives.

Weaker responses were mainly descriptive. A major part of these responses consisted of repeating the description of the actions of the Prophet (pbuh) followed by a simplistic statement suggesting that Muslims should do the same. Some answers did offer explanation, but it was too exaggerated or unrealistic and these were not supported with any examples.

Question 4

- (a) This question was also popular. Candidates who did well on this question started with the Makkan's plan to assassinate the Prophet (pbuh), followed by his departure from his house, his refuge at the Cave of Thaur and the events that happened subsequently, particularly the chase by Suraqa.

Excellent responses went into considerable detail of each incident, quoting Qur'anic verses and references from authoritative sources. The events that took place between the departure from the Cave of Thaur and arrival at Madina were specifically narrated in immense detail.

Weaker responses went into unnecessary details of the Pledges of 'Aqabah and visit to Ta'if, this consumed much precious time. Others moved from one incident to the other leaving out essential details. Inaccuracies were another cause of low marks.

- (b) Candidates seemed to have quickly skimmed through this question, they began writing quickly, wrote an impressive amount on the significance of *hijra* but did not link it to the present, thus losing access to higher marks. The responses that scored well discussed how *hijra* ensured the survival of Islam as well as the formation of a comprehensive system of rules and regulations which are still followed by Muslims around the world.

A different approach taken by some candidates talked about the lessons that could be learned and applied by present-day Muslim communities. This included migration under insufferable circumstances as well as treating immigrants well. Such responses also gave valid specific examples.

Most of the answers gave a standard, satisfactory answer stating a simplistic point of significance of *hijra* or suggesting that Muslims living in oppressed societies should migrate. These answers lacked further explanation or exemplification.

Question 5

- (a) This was by far the least popular question, attempted by under one third of the candidates. Most of those attempting it gave a basic answer describing who the Helpers and the Immigrants were, the bond of brotherhood created between them, and a vague description of help offered by the Helpers. Better answers gave details of the pairs created, precise information about what *Ansars* offered to *Muhajirun*, quoting the Abdur Rahman incident and Qur'an verses about the Helpers and the Immigrants. Many wrote a general commentary on the life in Madina in the first year of the Prophet's arrival there.

- (b) The majority of candidates answering this question gave a list of general acts of kindness that can be carried out by Muslims living in any community. To achieve higher levels, candidates needed to be more specific and tell how 'brotherhood or sisterhood' could be practiced by giving specific examples from their local communities at national or international level and show how Islam binds its followers in a relationship that is stronger than any other bond as it eliminates any difference of class, colour and ethnicity.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/21
Paper 2

Key messages

Read the question carefully in order to understand what it is asking.

Select key information with which to answer the question. Do not write everything you know about a topic but stay focused on what is being asked.

Use examples to support answers where relevant.

General comments

Candidates who performed well understood the requirement of each question and maintained their focus. It was noticeable that many candidates were prepared for the examination, this came through in their answers. It is critical for candidates to understand what the focus of the question is. This will ensure they answer it correctly. Candidates who develop their answers with carefully selected knowledge always achieve more than those who try to cover as much material as possible.

Part **(b)** questions are usually looking for some sort of individual thinking on behalf of the candidate – not just a continuation of the narration of events from part **(a)**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

From the four Hadiths given, candidates needed to select any two and say, in part **(a)**, what the teachings given in them were for Muslims, and in part **(b)** say how Muslims could put those teachings into action. This year, unlike past years, there were no clear favourites and candidates chose from all four given Hadiths evenly.

In part **(a)** for Hadith 1 candidates tended to paraphrase. It is important that for this part of the answer teachings are clearly expressed and that candidates do not elaborate as that leads to repetition in both parts of the answer.

Hadiths 2, 3 and 4 were straightforward and the highest attaining answers addressed clearly the ‘belief’ part of this question.

In part **(b)** some candidates repeated the examples already given from their part **(a)** answer. Furthermore, marks cannot be gained by copying from the translation in the question paper. Candidates should be encouraged to give their own examples.

Candidates gave many examples of how *halal* earnings can be made. Comments about the dignity of labour were basic and could have been expanded upon by saying how the Prophet (pbuh) took part in the construction of the mosque in Madina or the digging of the trenches in the Battle of Khandaq. Likewise, in Hadiths 3 and 4, actions needed to be clearly given to show the implementation of the teachings.

Question 2

The question asked the candidate to describe the method in which *qiyas* is practiced and to give examples to support their knowledge to show development of their answers.

It was not clear from answers that candidates clearly understood *qiyas* as there was a lack of coherence in answers. Content should have included an introduction to *qiyas*, how *qiyas* was a secondary source of law making, that it should never contradict the first three sources, that it was based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunna. Not all candidates used the terminology *asl*, *far*, *illa* and *hukm*, few clearly expressed the process in their examples.

Some candidates did confuse *ijma* and *qiyas* and were unable to do well in this compulsory question. However, some very good answers were seen. These were full of examples that were relevant and not always commonly used by candidates.

In part **(b)** of the answer the focus should have been on *why* the Prophet (pbuh) encouraged his Companions to exercise *qiyas*. Sound reasoning to back up the point of view given in the answer would have, and did, enable candidates to get higher levels in this question.

Some candidates did not understand the question and wrote about the importance of *qiyas* or wrote about the difference between *ijma* and *qiyas*. Those who understood the requirement of the question and knew what *qiyas* was, were able to put forward good answers.

Question 3

This was a straightforward question asking about the administration of the caliphate in the period of 'Uthman. Weaker responses were characterised by a focus on the compilation of the Qur'an in his caliphate with little else included. There were responses in which his biography was well written prior to him becoming caliph but unfortunately no marks were awarded for irrelevant content. Furthermore, content that focused on the rebellion and his assassination were not credited as this question had a specific focus of the caliphate under 'Uthman.

The best responses included 'Uthman's administrative measures and his achievements (which were linked to how they led to a good administrative process).

In part **(b)** almost all candidates gave his greatest achievement as the compilation of the Qur'an. Even those who did very poorly in part **(a)** were able to do well in part **(b)**.

Question 4

This question assessed knowledge of the events of the Battle of Siffin and the arbitration that followed it. Accounts of 'Ali's election, the Battle of Camel and 'Ali's martyrdom should not have been a part of this answer. Candidates did go into unnecessary background as well as post-arbitration details, which were not required.

This question was characterised by a lack of detailed knowledge of the battle and arbitration. Candidates had a general idea about the battle, but accounts of arbitration were sometimes confused.

For part **(b)**, responses became detailed and the *Kharijis* were written about at great length. 'Ali's martyrdom was given as an eventual outcome of the failed arbitration and marks were credited to all well-discussed answers.

Question 5

This question was very specific in asking the candidates to write about the events that took place on the first three days of *hajj*. Restrictions of *ihram*, what pilgrims do post 10th *Dhul Hijja* were not relevant to the answer.

Responses were mixed. Some had absolutely no idea about the events of the days being asked about and randomly put in places like Mena and Arafat with no knowledge of what their importance was, or what took place there. Some gave vague answers, the names of places visited were sometimes in the correct sequence but what happened at these places was not clearly written about. The best answers showed detailed knowledge of the events that took place on these three days.

Part **(b)** asked for the candidate's opinion on whether *hajj* should be performed multiple times or not. The opinion given needed to be well reasoned and supported if the candidate was to be rewarded.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/22
Paper 2

Key messages

Read the question carefully in order to understand what it is asking.

Select key information with which to answer the question. Do not write everything you know about a topic but stay focused on what is being asked.

Use examples to support answers where relevant.

General comments

Candidates who performed well understood the requirement of each question and maintained their focus. It was noticeable that many candidates were prepared for the examination, this came through in their answers. It is critical for candidates to understand what the focus of the question is. This will ensure they answer it correctly. Candidates who develop their answers with carefully selected knowledge always achieve more than those who try to cover as much material as possible.

Part **(b)** questions are usually looking for some sort of individual thinking on behalf of the candidate – not just a continuation of the narration of events from part **(a)**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The four Hadiths for study in this Paper were Hadiths 18, 13, 10 and 19.

In part **(a)** answers, Hadith 18 was not clearly understood by the candidates and many answers simply wrote about how having faith will lead a person to paradise and a lack of it to hell fire. The teaching given in this Hadith is how Allah dislikes pride in humans, how Iblis was expelled from paradise on account of his arrogance, how a believer must always remain humble as pride belongs to Allah alone and how even a tiny bit of faith will lead one to paradise.

The focus for Hadith 13 was *huffaz* and memorising the Qur'an. More broadly the theme was how Muslims should engage with the Qur'an as part of their daily lives and the importance of reading it and understanding its meaning. Candidates wrote from a very narrow and did not develop their answer enough.

Hadith 10 highlighted a lack of understanding. The focus of how care in the community is comparable to *huquq al 'ibad* and rewards are equal to acts of physical worship were missed.

Hadith 19 was well attempted. Candidates understood this one instructs Muslims to live their lives according to God's laws and refrain from what he has forbidden.

In part **(b)** those candidates who had not grasped the full understanding of the teachings were limited in what they wrote in their answers and they were, at best, satisfactory. The best responses gave clear examples of how one could put these teachings into action. Candidates must be reminded that part **(b)** answers should not be descriptive and that examples of putting them into action are necessary.

Question 2

This compulsory question had two parts that needed to be answered: *reasons* for compilation and *checks* for authenticity of Hadiths. Many candidates covered both aspects of the question, albeit not in equal depth or detail, though there were some that did, and these were rewarded with the highest marks.

In many responses, one part of the answer was stronger than the other. However, *Musannaf* and *Musnad* compilations were not the focus of this question. If they were referenced relevantly, perhaps as development, this knowledge was rewarded but, in some cases, simply writing an account of them did not answer the question. Hence, it is extremely important that candidates write relevant answers and if they use material that is not specific to the question they need to legitimately link it to the question as part of the response for it to be read as development.

Part (b) focused on the purpose of having false Hadiths in compilations. Many candidates could not make the distinction between false and weak Hadiths and wrote very good answers on why weak Hadiths were put in compilations but unfortunately could not get any marks for this content.

Those who understood the requirement of the question were able to write a varied account and every relevant answer was credited on its merit.

Question 3

Approximately half the cohort attempted this question. Candidate's responses needed to cover a range of examples of how Abu Bakr led the Islamic empire, with detail and development of certain events and examples to support knowledge. The question was not simply asking the candidates to write about the false prophets. Unfortunately, some candidates wrote about them in great detail with only a few lines on the rest of the examples that could have been used.

Questions such as the current **Question 3** need a broad response. The first Syrian expedition, the false prophets, the compilation of the Qur'an, the administrative measures he took, the *Ridda* wars, and examples of his humility and sacrifice as caliph could have been included.

Everything of course could not have been written about in the same amount of detail but to get to high levels and high marks the overall leadership of Abu Bakr had to be considered.

In part (b) we saw some really good answers on why it was important to defeat the false prophets and candidates wrote focused answers for this part of the question, with many getting to a level 3 and above.

Question 4

Two-thirds of the cohort attempted this question. All three aspects of *Tawhid* needed to be written about. The first aspect of Allah's Oneness was well written by most who answered this question. The second and third parts, dealing with His worship and names and attributes, were not as strong. Having said that some wonderful answers were seen with accurate quotes to develop the points being made. There was a marked improvement in the way this question was answered when compared to previous years, a testament to the hard work of teachers and candidates.

In part (b) many wrote about the *Shahadah* and belief in the Oneness of Allah and the finality of the Prophet (pbuh). To get to higher levels candidates needed to say how this belief is the axis around which the other Pillars revolve and follow from.

Question 5

The most popular optional question with eighty per cent of the cohort attempting to answer it. Candidates misunderstood the focus of the question, many wrote more about who can and cannot fast and the penalties of missing or breaking a fast as well as the benefits of fasting, rather than writing about how the Ramadan fast is observed. Understanding the demands of a question is critical in getting the marks aspired for. The irrelevant parts of the answer which were stating facts not asked in the question were ignored and the answer, where relevant, was given due marks.

In part (b) again candidates were asked to choose *the most important* benefit of fasting in Ramadan and then give reasons for the choice they had made. Unfortunately, candidates gave multiple benefits and brief

reasons for them. From the answers where more than one benefit was given, the strongest was taken and marks were awarded accordingly.

The instruction in the question must always be understood and followed. Those who made a choice and gave reasons for it did better than those who made two or more profound choices but barely commented on importance. This was true even if it was a simple one.